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ABSTRACT

Self, peer, and teacher ratings of student coping skills were compared to determine whether there was consistency in judgment across raters or whether assessments were rater-specific. Ratees were 250 Anglo, Black, and Chicano sixth graders from tri-ethnic classes. All raters were rated on the Behavior Rating Scale (BRS) by self, peers, and teacher. Consistency across raters was found in ranking of the three ethnic groups as follows: Anglos, Chicanos, and Blacks. Within ethnicity, there was consensus between self- and teacher-raters for Anglos and Chicanos with peers giving somewhat lower ratings. For Blacks, peers and teachers more closely concurred, but both sets of ratings were substantially lower than Black self-ratings. (Author)

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CONSISTENCY IN SELF, PEER, AND TEACHER RATINGS OF STUDENT COPING SKILLS

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Consistency in Self, Peer, and Teacher Ratings of Student Coping Skills

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Psychologists and educators have become increasingly interested in emotional and motivational factors in addition to the purely cognitive factors as goals of educational programs (Anderson and Messick, 1974; Peck and Hughes, 1979; Schaefer, 1978; Zigler, 1970; Zigler and Trickett, 1978). This interest in social competence and social adjustment has prompted the study of coping variables and their relationship to children's success in school and the world (Peck and Hughes, 1979; Zigler and Trickett, 1978). Several conceptual models of adaptive behavior have recently been developed. These models have emphasized the importance of effective coping as a primary contributor to school achievement (Fullan and Loubser, 1972; Peck, 1967; Peck, 1973). Findings stemming from related research have confirmed that one of the most important determinants of children's success in school is their ability to adapt and function effectively in the school environment (Peck, Hughes and Froming, 1978).

Paper and pencil instruments have proven to be an economical and valid means of appraising student behavior and social adjustment coping skills. In most studies the instrument is a self-report measure or is completed by the teacher or peers. The question arises as to whether there is consistency in judgment across raters or whether assessments are rater specific. Although Semler (1960) collected self, peer, and teacher assessments of student adjustment, he had each set of raters complete different measures. Data from the Teaching-Learning Interaction Study provide a unique opportunity to compare self, peer, and teacher ratings on a single measure (the Behavior Rating Scale) across three ethnic groups.

Ratees were 250 sixth grade students, from tri-ethnic classes in Austin, Texas. The sample was composed of Anglo, Black, and Chicano students represented in a 65:15:20 ratio respectively. This ratio corresponds to the ethnic make-up of the total local population.

The Behavior Rating Scale (BRS) developed by Peck, Kajita, and Haak (1972) consists of 11 bipolar items describing student coping behaviors, such as "works hard - does not work hard," "gets along with students - does not get along with students," and "dependable - not dependable." The items are scored on a 5-point scale ranging from "very much" on one pole to "very much" on the other. Internal consistency is .95. Peck, Clements, and Weber (1977) found the BRS to be free from ethnic bias, defined as an interaction between ethnicity of peer raters and ethnicity of ratees.

Ratings for Anglos, Blacks, and Chicanos were subjected to factor analyses independently for each group of raters in order to examine whether or not all raters viewed the different subsamples along a common dimension. No significant differences were found among any of the factor structures using Veldman's (1974) Relate program. A single general factor was predominant, regardless of rater or ratee. The existence of a common dimension increases the validity of comparisons among raters and subsamples.

A one-within, one-between analysis of variance with an unweighted means solution (Winer, 1971) was chosen since it is the generally accepted method of analyzing repeated measures designs with unequal N's. "Rater" was the repeated measure, since each ratee was rated by three sets of raters. Planned comparisons among ethnic groups within rater and among raters within ethnicity were done.

Significant main effects were found both for rater and for ethnicity (See Table 2). Self-ratings were significantly higher ($p < .01$) than peer and teacher ratings (See Table 3). Anglos were rated highest by all raters, followed by Chicanos. Blacks were rated lowest by all raters, including self. Figure 1 shows the ratings of each of the ethnic groups by each of the three sets of raters.

The interaction between ethnicity and rater was also significant, (F (4,494) = 9.612, $p < .001$). Self-ratings were significantly higher than peer ratings for all three ethnic groups, but only for Blacks were self-ratings significantly higher than teacher ratings. Teacher ratings were higher than peer ratings for Anglos and Chicanos, but lower for Blacks (See Table 5 and Figure 1).

Examining the relationship between ethnic groups within raters shows that Chicanos were consistently rated below Anglos. The difference was not however statistically significant for any of the three sets of raters. Blacks were rated lowest by all raters. The difference between Blacks and Anglos was statistically significant at $p < .01$ for peer and teacher raters. Ratings of Blacks were significantly different ($p < .01$) from ratings of Chicanos for teacher ratings (See Figure 1 and Table 4).

In conclusion, although peer ratings tend to be lower than self and teacher ratings, there is generally consistency across raters in ranking of the three ethnic groups in terms of social adjustment coping. This is particularly true between self and teacher ratings for Anglos and Chicanos. Peer and teachers rate Blacks more similarly, and both sets of ratings are substantially below the self-ratings of Blacks.

Three implications seem to follow from the findings. First, self, peer, and teacher ratings are generally consistent both across and within ethnic groups.

The second implication concerns the assumption sometimes made that all minorities are similar to one another but are different from the majority. These findings exemplify the situation where results are very dissimilar for different minorities. One minority group (Chicanos) resembles more closely the majority group (Anglos) while the other minority group (Blacks) is different from both Anglos and Chicanos. The distinction among different minority groups should not be overlooked.

The third implication concerns the low ratings on a measure of social adjustment coping received by Blacks as opposed to Anglos and Chicanos in this sample. This situation suggests a genuine problem which may be faced by Black students in school. Although self-ratings by Blacks are higher than their peer and teacher ratings, even the former are below self-ratings by Anglos and Chicanos. The highest ratings for Blacks (self) are lower than the lowest ratings for Anglos and lower than self and teacher ratings for Chicanos. This situation may precipitate two further problems for these

Black students. First, it would be expected that this would cause the Black students' morale to suffer. A second problem from which the Blacks appear to suffer, results from the large discrepancy between Black self-ratings and those received from peers and teachers. Although self-ratings are below those of other ethnic groups, they are still far above the ratings given to the Blacks by fellow students and by teachers. This suggests a degree of optomistic unrealism in their self-appraisals which is not found in the other ethnic groups. If, in fact, their coping skills are much below what they believe, this could hamper them considerably in identifying and remedying deficiencies in a realistic, effective manner. How to overcome this problem without subjecting these students to an initial sense of overwhelming discouragement is of utmost concern. Peer and teacher support are very much needed in such circumstances.

Further evidence to support the existence of the above mentioned problems is abundant. Black students have been found to have lower achievement test scores than Anglos or Chicanos (Touliatos, Lindholm, & Rich, 1977; Jantz, 1974). Ineffective coping skills may lead to poor achievement which in turn may lead to declines in self-esteem (See Blattstein, Blattstein, and Peck, 1978). If Black students do utilize poor coping skills, as both rating and performance measures indicate (Peck, 1977) it is an injustice to these students to claim that such results are due solely or primarily to ethnic bias, particularly when this measure has been tested and found to be free from ethnic bias (Peck, Clements, and Weber, 1977). Such a position would ignore the real problem and jeopardize any chance for these students to improve academically, and thus to avoid further failure and feelings of incompetence.

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Table 1
Cell Means and Standard Deviations

	Self	Peer	Teacher
ANGLO	418.26 (68.49)[1]	402.50 (76.39)	416.11 (111.11)
BLACK	381.00 (87.70)	310.73 (74.61)	282.13 (97.63)
CHICANO	393.10 (73.50)	359.10 (84.66)	378.12 (124.64)

[1]Numbers in parentheses are standard deviations.

Table 2
F - test and Probability for
Ethnicity and Rater

Source	F - test	DF	Prob.
Ethnicity (E)	16.6473	2,247	< .001
Rater (R)	21.2008	2,494	< .001
E x R	9.6122	4,494	< .001

Table 3
t - tests and Probability for Effects
Between Ethnic Groups and Raters

Effect	t-test	DF	Prob.
A[1] vs. B[2]	2.704	1,247	< .01
A vs. C[3]	1.095	1,247	NS
B vs. C	1.609	1,247	NS
S[4] vs. P[5]	10.708	1,494	< .01
S vs. T[6]	10.343	1,494	< .01
P vs. T	1.361	1,494	NS

[1] Anglos

[2] Blacks

[3] Chicanos

[4] Self-ratings

[5] Peer ratings

[6] Teacher ratings

Table 4
t - tests and Probability for Effects
Within Rater Between Ethnic Groups

Effect	t-test	DF	Prob.
Within Self			
A[1] vs. B[2]	1.459	1,247	NS
A vs. C[3]	1.133	1,247	NS
B vs. C	.3909	1,247	NS
Within Peer			
A vs. B	3.593	1,247	< .01
A vs. C	1.955	1,247	NS
B vs. C	1.563	1,247	NS
Within Teacher			
A vs. B	5.245	1,247	< .01
A vs. C	1.709	1,247	NS
B vs. C	3.104	1,247	< .01

[1] Anglos

[2] Blacks

[3] Chicanos

Table 5
t - tests and Probability for Effects
Within Ethnicity Between Raters

Effect	t-test	DF	Prob.
Within Anglos			
S[1] vs. P[2]	3.559	1,494	< .01
S vs. T[3]	.4846	1,494	NS
P vs. T	3.074	1,494	< .01
Within Blacks			
S vs. P	6.515	1,494	< .01
S vs. T	9.166	1,494	< .01
P vs. T	2.651	1,494	< .01
Within Chicanos			
S vs. P	3.730	1,494	< .01
S vs. T	1.638	1,494	NS
P vs. T	2.092	1,494	< .05

[1] Self-ratings

[2] Peer ratings

[3] Teacher ratings

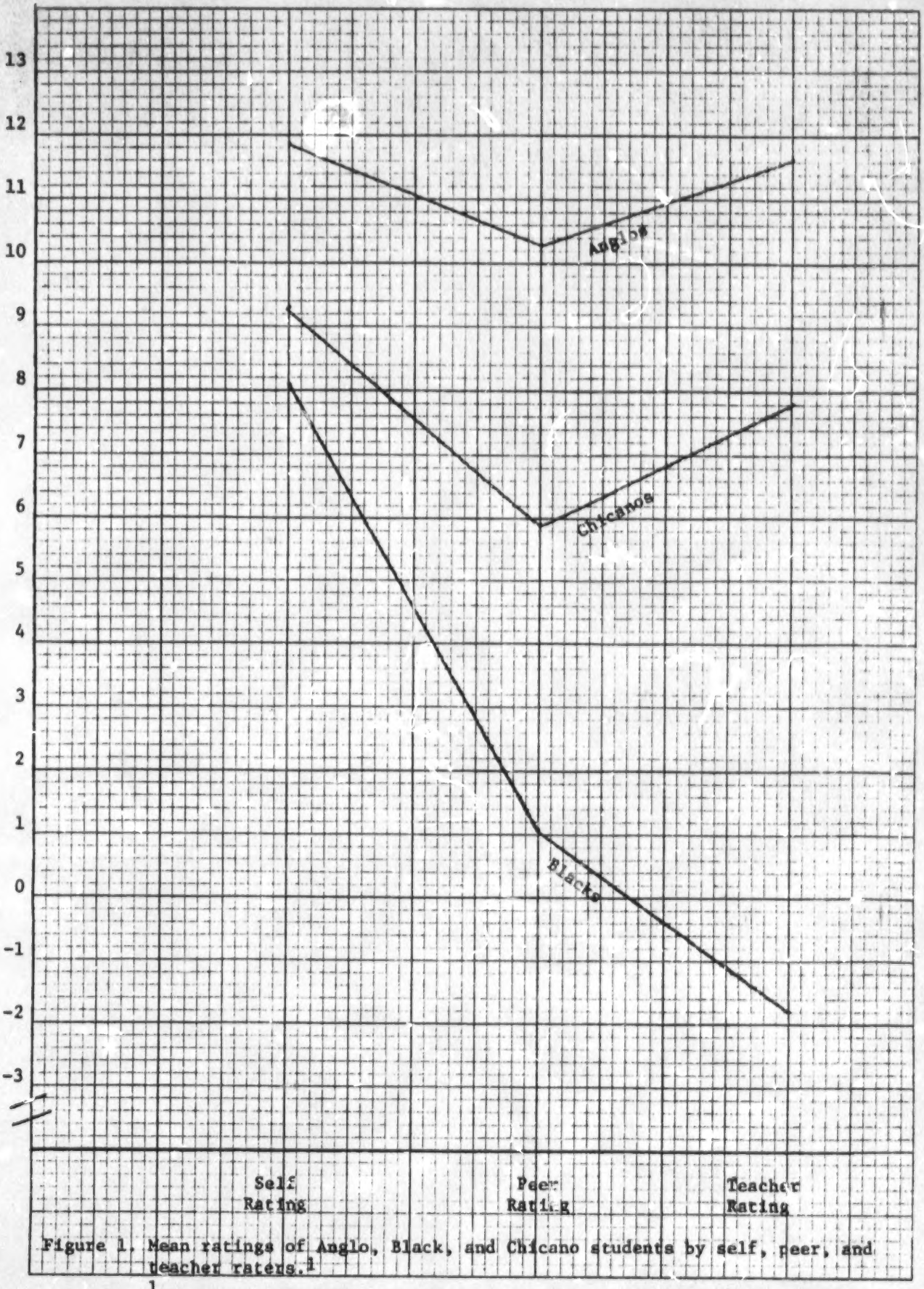

Figure 1. Mean ratings of Anglo, Black, and Chicano students by self, peer, and teacher raters.[1]

[1]The means from Table 1 were transformed by the following formula and are depicted here. $\frac{\text{mean}}{10} - 30$